

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF
COMMUNITY AFFAIRS



CROSSING THE LINE

SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN MIDDLE SCHOOLS



State of New Jersey
Department of Community Affairs
Susan Bass Levin
Commissioner

COMMENTS FROM COMMISSIONER LEVIN

Sexual harassment can happen to anyone of any age. That is why it is important that you know what sexual harassment is and what to do if it happens to you or someone you know.

This brochure provides you with important information about sexual harassment. It gives you examples of things that can be considered sexual harassment - things you may not have thought of as sexual harassment, but maybe weren't comfortable with. It outlines the thoughts, feelings and reactions you may have to a situation and offers options regarding what to do if you are being sexually harassed.

If you are being sexually harassed, it is important for you to ask for help from a trusted adult, like a parent, teacher, school nurse or a counselor. Additionally, every county in New Jersey has a rape care center that can offer you free and confidential help if you are being sexually harassed.

If you think someone has crossed the line, don't be afraid or embarrassed to ask for help.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan Bass Levin".

Susan Bass Levin
Commissioner

WHAT IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

Sexual harassment is any unwanted and uninvited behaviors, gestures, looks, comments, or touching of a sexual nature. It is usually done on purpose to make someone feel uncomfortable, intimidated or threatened. It may even result in physical injury.

WHY TALK ABOUT IT? BECAUSE...

- Anyone can be harassed. One in three students are sexually harassed for the first time during the 6th through 8th grades. (Source: PUSH: NJ SCHOOLS, Nobody Should Joke Around Like That)
- Anyone can be a harasser, including other students, team members, leaders and teachers.
- It is illegal, and anyone over the age of 8 may be subject to criminal prosecution and civil penalties.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT CAN BE...

- Sexual gestures, noises, whistles or stares that make the other person uncomfortable
- Conversations that are too personal
- Calling someone a sexual name
- Teasing or commenting about someone's private parts
- Saying sexual things to someone without their consent
- Spreading sexual rumors about someone
- Telling dirty jokes another person doesn't want to hear
- Showing dirty pictures another person doesn't want to see
- Brushing up against someone in a sexual way
- Touching or grabbing someone's clothes or body
- Throwing or aiming things at someone's private parts

HOW CAN SEXUAL HARASSMENT AFFECT YOU?

Common Feelings:

- Uncomfortable
- Embarrassed
- Self-conscious
- Ashamed
- Confused
- Afraid
- Helpless
- Alone

Common Thoughts:

- I can't believe this is happening to me.
- I don't like it, I don't want it, and I'm not interested.
- I wish I could make this stop.
- I wish I could get away.
- I wish they would just leave me alone.

Common Reactions:

- Loss of confidence
- Not wanting to go to school
- Avoiding people and places
- Finding it hard to concentrate or study
- Having trouble sleeping
- Change in eating habits

WHAT CAN I DO IF I'M BEING HARASSED?

- Talk or write to the harasser telling them you don't like what they are doing and asking them to stop.
- Keep a journal of each time something happens, including dates, times, witnesses and if you were able to stop it. Include how the situation made you feel.
- Talk to a trusted adult who would understand the way you feel. Have them help you find out about and follow your school's sexual harassment policy.
- Report the offensive behavior to a teacher, counselor or school administrator.
- If your school does not correct the problem, ask a trusted adult to contact: Office of Civil Rights, US Department of Education
600 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, DC
20202-1100
- For additional information and a complaint form, ask a trusted adult to contact the New York office for Civil Rights at:
75 Park Place, New York, NY 10007
(212) 637-6466, weekdays from 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
- You also can call the New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault at **800-601-7200**. A recorded message will list the local hotline in your county. When you call the local hotline, you may need to leave a name and a phone number for a counselor to return your call.

WHAT CAN I DO IF I WITNESS SOMEONE ELSE BEING HARASSED?

- Say that you don't think it's funny.
- Tell the harasser to stop.
- Encourage the person being harassed to seek the help of a teacher, counselor, school administrator or hotline.

NOT SURE IF YOUR BEHAVIOR COULD BE CONSIDERED SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

Take this test: Would you say or do the same thing in front of your parent, teacher or other respected adult? No? Then don't say it or do it at all! This behavior may very well be considered sexual harassment.

County Rape Crisis Program Numbers:

| | | | |
|------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|
| Atlantic | 800-286-4184 | Middlesex | 877-665-7273 |
| Bergen | 201-487-2227 | Monmouth | 888-264-7273 |
| Burlington | 856-234-8888 | | 732-264-7273 |
| | 609-267-8500 | Morris | 973-829-0587 |
| Camden | 866-295-7378 | Ocean | 732-370-4010 |
| Cape May | 609-522-6489 | | 609-494-1090 |
| Cumberland | 856-455-5555 | Passaic | 973-881-1450 |
| Essex | 877-733-2273 | Salem | 856-935-6655 |
| Gloucester | 866-295-7378 | Somerset | 908-526-7444 |
| Hudson | 201-795-5757 | Sussex | 973-875-1211 |
| Hunterdon | 888-988-4033 | Union | 908-233-7273 |
| Mercer | 609-394-9000 | Warren | 866-623-7233 |

Copies of this brochure may be obtained by contacting:
NJ Department of Community Affairs - Division on Women
101 South Broad Street - PO Box 801
Trenton, NJ 08625-0801
(609) 292-8840 TTY 609-777-0799
www.nj.gov/dca/dow

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